

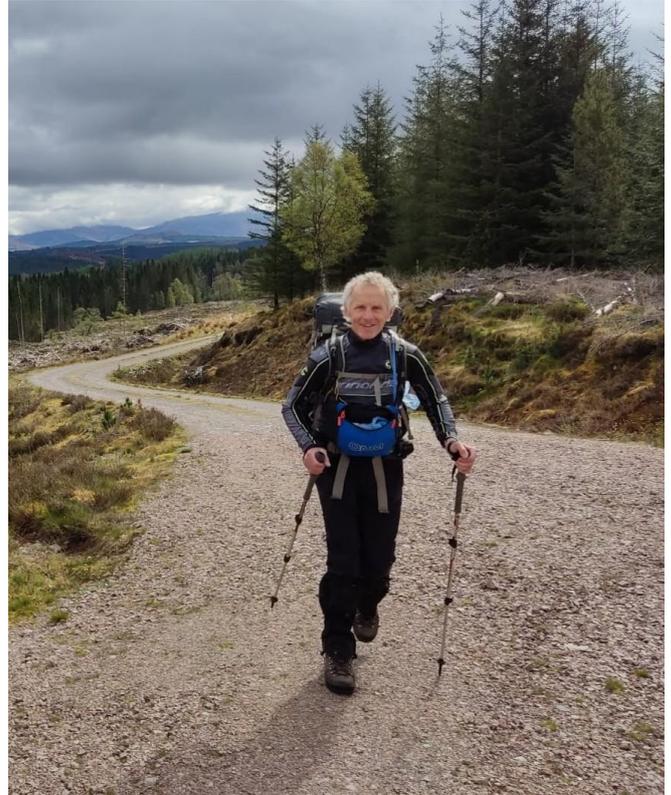
## Henry's East Highland Way Trek

131 km in 4.5 days backpacking and wild camping for Mental Health Research UK because MHRUK's funding of research is so important

### Story

Research into mental illness is terribly underfunded so I want to do a little bit to help.

Someone I know very well has had a serious mental illness for almost 20 years. During this time, he has been prescribed all available types of the sort medication he must take to enable him to function. One caused a build-up of chemicals which became dangerous so had to be discontinued and didn't really make him fully well anyway. Another caused an immediate life threatening decrease in blood pressure so was quickly abandoned. Another had such major side effects that he couldn't write his name. The fourth, which he has now been taking for many years, causes major weight gain, which he has fought and substantially overcome, and debilitating drowsiness in the mornings. Not a great option but there isn't an alternative.



Unbelievably, he is one of the lucky ones, many people with his condition fail to find any medication which works at all. If we could only understand these illnesses better, in the same way that we now understand most physical illnesses, much more and better medication could be produced. This is why we urgently need more research.

At least 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem at some point in their lives and some estimates are as high as 1 in 2. In the under 65s almost as many life years are lost as a result of mental illness as are lost due to all physical illnesses put together. But, despite the huge impact of mental ill health on individuals and the economy, mental health research receives only a fraction of the funding that supports research into other long-term chronic diseases.

So as I'm about to attempt a stupid challenge - carrying a 16kg backpack 131 km through the Scottish Highlands in 4.5 days, I decided to raise some money for MHRUK: Mental Health Research UK.

MHRUK is a relatively small charity so all donations make a big difference.

## Challenge

Well we completed it! In my case only due to being driven on very hard by Aidan on several occasions when I just didn't want to go any further.

## The highlights

- the trip up to Dalnashallag Bothy in remote Glen Banchor where we camped for the night and the trip back down. Great walk across pathless moorland fording lots of streams (and remarkably not falling in). And a night spent in what felt like the real wilderness.

- a warm shower at a BnB after 3 nights wild camping

- managing to survive for 3 days without access to a shop or cafe. Thank goodness for some great wild camping gear I borrowed

- the first Americano at a cafe after the 3 day gap

- finishing the trek



## The lowlights

- realising 3 miles after leaving the cafe mentioned above (and after the cafe had closed) that I had left my walking poles there. My walking poles were doubling as tent poles, so without them I couldn't use the tent! Hence the B and B on Thursday.

- the last few miles on Tuesday when I was tired and grumpy at the end of a 22 mile day. But I was then saved by Aidan who collected and filtered water and cooked dehydrated dinner at our beach camp area (whilst I just sat on the beach exhausted)

- the last few miles on Thursday when my progress was really slow due to blistered feet. Again saved by Aidan doing an emergency dinner of triple porridge and dehydrated soup on another beach - we had expected a cafe but none were open.

All in all a brilliant trip.

Thanks again everyone for your fantastic support.